DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 477 901 SO 035 014

TITLE	Eight Stars of Gold--The Story of Alaska's Flag. Primary Grade Activities.
INSTITUTION	Alaska State Museum, Juneau.
PUB DATE	2002-00-00
NOTE	11p.; For related documents, see SO 035 015-017.
AVAILABLE FROM	Alaska State Museum, 395 Whittier St., Juneau, AK 99801-1718. Tel: 907-465-2901; Fax: 907-465-2976; Web site: http://www.museums.state.ak.us/ .
PUB TYPE	Guides - Classroom - Learner (051) -- Guides - Classroom - Teacher (052)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Academic Standards; History; Language Arts; Mathematics; Primary Education; Primary Sources; *Social Studies; *State History; *State Standards; Student Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS	*Alaska; Historical Background

ABSTRACT

This activities booklet focuses on the story of Alaska's flag. The booklet is intended for teachers to use with primary-grade children. Each activity in the booklet contains background information, a summary and time estimate, Alaska state standards, a step-by-step technique for implementing the activity, assessment tips, materials and resource needs, a vocabulary, "Learning about Constellations," and extension activities. Activity sheets are: "Benny Benson: The Boy Who Designed Alaska's Flag (How Did Alaska Get its Flag?)"; "Flags: Symbols of Peace (What Does a Flag Show Us?)"; and "Learning about Constellations (Why Is the Big Dipper on the Alaska Flag?)." Includes a "Picture Cards" sheet, directions for making a five-points star, a recipe for star sugar cookies, and a star chart sample. (BT)

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ED 477 901

Alaska State Museum

Eight Stars of Gold
The Story of Alaska's Flag

Primary Grade Activities

Alaska State Museum
395 Whittier Street
Juneau, AK 99801-1718

http://www.museums.state.ak.us/EightStars/activities.html

2002

SO 035 014

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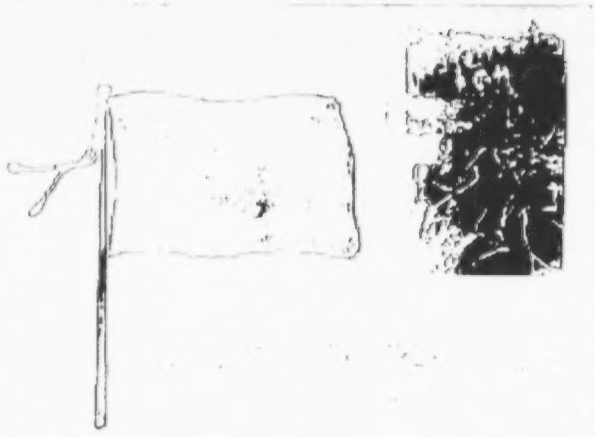
EIGHT STARS OF GOLD ACTIVITY

BENNY BENSON
THE BOY WHO DESIGNED ALASKA'S FLAG

How did Alaska get its flag?

Level: Primary (K-2)



Background
Benny Benson, an Alaska Native seventh grader from the Jesse Lee Mission Home in Seward, won the Alaska Flag Contest in 1927. His simple but elegant design was selected from 142 entries. Benny's life changed forever as he became a famous Alaskan within the state and across the country.

Benny's original entry is in the Alaska State Museum collection. III-0-410

Summary
Children hear the story of how Benny Benson entered and won the Alaska flag contest in 1927. Children practice listening skills and demonstrate their understanding about the origins of Alaska's flag through a performance. As an option, they may collaborate and perform with middle school students who write a play based on Benny's story.

Estimated Time
40 minutes to do the pre-reading, reading of the text, and the retelling.

Allow a week to practice and perform the play (Option 2).

In this activity students will focus on the following :

Alaska Performance Standards at Benchmark 1
Reading
- 2.b Use a variety of strategies to support comprehension
- 4.a Retell or dramatize a story after reading it
- 4.b Restate information after reading a text

Alaska Content Standards
English/Language Arts
- B.1 Comprehend meaning from written text and oral and visual information by applying a variety of reading, listening and viewing strategies
- C.2 Organize a project
- C.5 Work on a collaborative project, taking responsibility, sharing workloads, incorporating individual talents and perspectives, working effectively and evaluating the work of self and others

Activities
Step One: Before reading
- Hold up the book cover and read the book title. Ask the children "What do you think this book will be about?" Record student responses. Tell the students you'll read the book and they should listen to see if what they thought really happens in the story.
- Discuss the concept of a flag designer to elicit children's prior knowledge and build on the concept of a person who creates designs.
- Display the Alaska flag in front of the class. Ask the children if any of them have ever heard of Benny Benson or how Alaska got its flag. Tell the children that this book will let them know the "true story."

Step Two: During reading
- Read the book *Benny's Flag* to the class, showing them the illustrations as you read. Point out interesting facts and vocabulary on each page. Also answer any questions that the children might have as you read.

Step Three: After reading
Option 1: Storytelling
(If older students are not available to do a play, this option will help the children review the story.)
- Have each child work with a partner or a small group to retell the story of Benny Benson to students in another class. The children can either use the "Picture Cards" provided or create pictures themselves. Students should retell the main ideas in the correct order. (See Picture Cards.)
- Record (audio or videotape) the children's storytelling performances and share with parents and others.

Option 2: A Benny Benson play with older students
(This could be done with the middle school students who are working on the Steps to Statehood activity)

- Have middle school partners or buddies re-read the story of Benny and the flag to individuals or pairs of children. Tell the group that the middle schoolers have written a short play about Benny and that the class is going to act in the play. Explain how they must listen and follow the directions of the older students, so that the play can be performed in public. (See Steps to Statehood activity.)
- Assist the middle school students as they rehearse the play with the younger children. Make sure that each child understands what he/she is supposed to do in the performance.
- Invite all parents to attend a performance of the play. Serve star sugar cookies and juice after the play. (See Famous Stars activity for a cookie recipe.)

Assessment

Children should be able to retell the story in sequence of how Benny Benson designed Alaska's flag and include at least two or three main ideas.

Materials and Resource

- A copy of the book *Benny's Flag*
- Picture cards

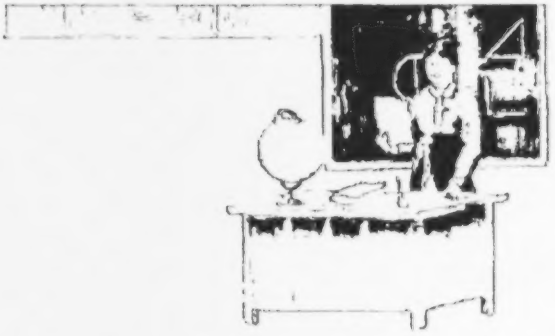
Vocabulary

baton n. A rod twirled by a drum major
dormitory n. A building with many rooms for sleeping and living in
glacier n. A mass of ice and snow moving slowly down a valley or mountain
mast n. A tall vertical spar used to support sails
Mission Home n. A home that provides shelter and schooling
mukluks n. Boots made of animal skin, usually seal or reindeer
northernmost adj. The farthest north
parka n. A heavy, hooded jacket
pledge n. A promise or an agreement
sleigh riding v. To ride in a sleigh, which is a light vehicle on runners, for travel on snow
twinkly adj. To twinkle or sparkle
uniform n. All the same, as in clothing

PICTURE CARDS

Directions: Print the cards (use a color printer if possible.) Cut them apart and have the children take turns putting them in the correct order. The children can use the cards to tell another child the story.

Benny in Mission Home dormitory



Contest is announced

Getting ideas about Alaska

Students share their entries

Benny wins the contest

Flag is made and Benny is in the parade

The illustrations from the book Benny's Flag *are provided courtesy of artist Jim Fowler. Copyright 2001.*

EIGHT STARS OF GOLD ACTIVITY

FLAGS: SYMBOLS OF PLACE

What does a flag show us?

Level: Primary (K-2)

Background

Flags tell us about a place and the people who live there by the symbols used in the design. Benny Benson, the designer of Alaska's flag, explained what his design meant to him: "The blue field is for the Alaska sky and the forget-me-not, an Alaskan flower. The North Star is for the future state of Alaska, the most northerly in the Union. The Dipper is for the Great Bear—symbolizing strength." The Alaskan environment has many strong symbols.

An illustration by Jim Fowler from the book *Benny's Flag.*

Summary

Children explore the meaning of symbols through activities relating to images suitable for Alaska. They make Alaskan flags to take home and display.

Estimated Time

30 minutes per day, for 3 days.
(Step Three may take longer, depending on the options selected by the teacher.)

In this activity students will focus on the following:

Alaska Performance Standards at Benchmark 1

Math

1 Count and model one-to-one correspondence

Alaska Content Standards

English/Language Arts

A.4 Write to describe

A.6 Use visual techniques to communicate ideas

B.1 Comprehend meaning from written text and oral and visual information by applying a variety of reading, listening and viewing strategies

B.2 Reflect on, analyze and evaluate a variety of oral, written and visual information and experiences

B.3 Relate what he/she views, reads and hears to practical purposes in his/her own life, the world outside and to other texts and experiences

History

A.5 Understand that history is a narrative told in many voices

B.2 Understand the people who have shaped the history of the state

Activities

Step One: Find and count flags.
Identify symbols.

- Where do we fly a flag? Take a walk through the school and have the children find as many flags as they can. Count the flags. Are they all the same? If not, what are the differences? Which one is the flag for Alaska? How many Alaska flags can we find in school? Have a brief discussion about why people display flags. See if they can name other places where a flag is displayed. (Answers may include post office, town/village hall, etc.)
- Back in the classroom, explain that flags have designs called *symbols*. Symbols picture something that people really like about a place or represent a place or a thing. There are also symbols called *logos*, that represent a place or a thing (like the golden arches, which stand for McDonalds). Ask the children to name other symbols or logos of things that they see around them.
- Look at the designs on pages 20-21 that Benny and the other children drew for the Alaska flag contest in the *Eight Stars of Gold* exhibit catalog. Ask, "What things are on those flags?" "How do they remind you of living in Alaska?"
- Using a globe or a map of the United States, find the state of Alaska noting how far north it is and other details (depending on the ages of the children and their level of understanding).
  - Note: This only works on maps where Alaska is in its correct location, not as an insert in a corner.

Step Two: Brainstorm, draw and write.

- In pairs or small groups, have children brainstorm ideas about other symbols for Alaska. (With K – 1 children do this activity brainstorming ideas about their neighborhood/town/village first and then generalize to the state.)
- Ask what things they know about living in the Alaska environment? Have an adult or one member of the group, write the list of ideas.
  (Option: Make a Venn diagram with one circle that include "Things I see in Alaska" and a second circle that contains "Things I see in other places.")
- Have each pair or group share its ideas with the class. Post the lists of ideas.
- Each child can now choose a symbol that he/she thinks best represents the state of Alaska. Once each student has chosen a symbol, have him/her illustrate their symbols, using crayons, markers, or colored pencils.
- On the back of their "new" flag designs, children should dictate/write why they think it is a good symbol for Alaska.
- Display the new alternative flag designs around the room.
- Option: Children could create a mural of Alaska symbols, with each child contributing the design/symbol he or she has chosen and drawn.

Step Three: Create a flag.

- Have each child look at the State flag. Children can make their own copies of the Alaska flag to take home. Variations by grade level: Kindergarten — use a large piece of blue construction paper and star stickers to make a flag, counting the eight stars as they attach them. First grade — use tempera paints to color a paper flag, counting the stars as they paint. Second grade — use rectangular pieces of blue felt or fabric and attach either pre-cut stars or stars they cut from yellow felt or fabric, using a cardboard template of a star to trace.
- Before the children take their flags home, talk about where they might display their flag, introducing the idea of flag etiquette which they will learn more about when they are a little older. (See Flag Etiquette activity.)
- Make star-shaped sugar cookies (recipe follows) using the star template or a star cookie cutter . Use yellow food coloring in the dough before baking, or sprinkle with sugar dyed yellow with food coloring. After the cookies are baked, have the children arrange them on a cookie sheet–covered with blue construction paper –in the shape of the Big Dipper and North Star, like the Alaska flag.

Activity ideas contributed by Kathy Neilson, Literacy Specialist, Mendenhall River Elementary School.

Assessment

Children can explain what a symbol is and give two examples of symbols that they see in their lives or have created to symbolize how they feel about Alaska.

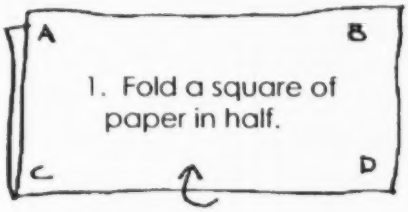
Materials and Resources

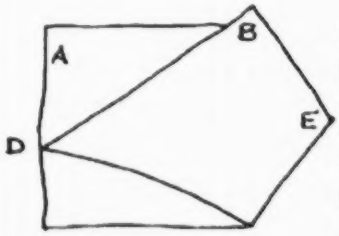
- Exhibit catalog: Spartz, India. *Eight Stars of Gold: The Story of Alaska's Flag*. Juneau: Alaska State Museum, 2001.
- Alaska Flag, as large as possible, so the whole class can see it
- Globe or map of the United States, including Alaska in its proper location
- Blue construction paper and star stickers (K)
- Drawing paper, blue and yellow tempera paint (Grade 1)
- Blue and yellow felt, glue, cardboard star template, scissors (Grade 2)
- Ingredients for sugar cookies (see below) and a star cookie cutter

Vocabulary

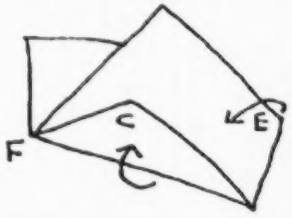
constellation n. A set of fixed stars

To Make a Star with Five Points

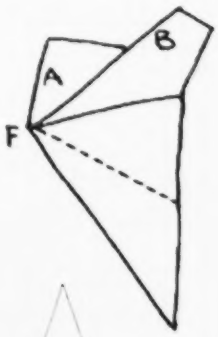




2. Fold corner D to a half-way point between A and C.



3. Fold corner C up. Fold corner E over to F.



4. Cut through all layers along dotted line. Unfold shaded area to make star.

Star Sugar Cookie Recipe

Contributed by Nancy DeCherney
of Juneau, co-author of
The Fiddlehead Cookbook

"I grew up using the Betty Crocker Traditional Sugar Cookie recipe, and it seems durable and serviceable."

Ingredients

3/4 cup shortening (*we used shortening back then, now I use all butter)*
1 cup sugar
2 eggs
1 teaspoon vanilla
2 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
1 teaspoon baking powder
1 teaspoon salt

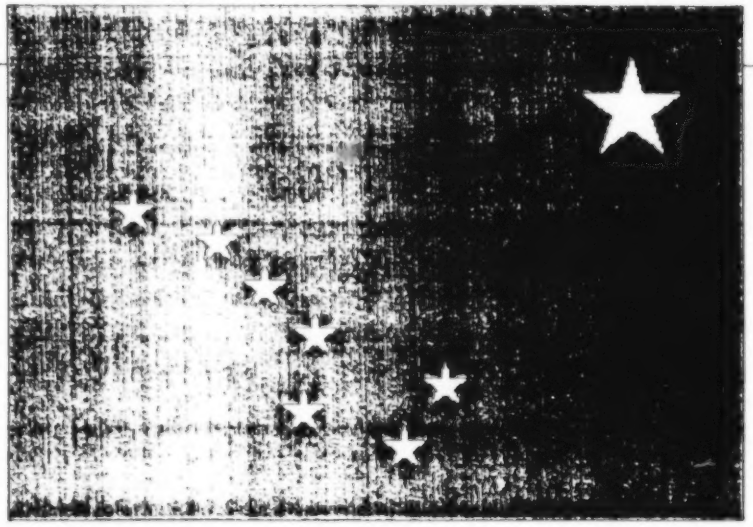
1. Cream the shortening, or butter, together with the sugar in a large mixing bowl. Add in the eggs and vanilla and beat until smooth.
2. Sift the flour, baking powder and salt together, and stir into the creamed mixture. Mix it just until it is all smooth. Cover and refrigerate for 1 hour. (*This part is very hard for kids - I will attest to that. It also decreased the overall number of cookies, as there is a tendency to "check" on the dough in the refrigerator during that time.*)
3. Heat oven to 400°F.
4. Roll out the dough to 1/8 inch thick on a lightly floured board. Cut into star shapes and place on an ungreased baking sheet.
5. Bake 6-8 minutes, until cookies are delicately browned on the edges. Remove from the oven, and remove from the baking pan immediately, to cool on a rack or towel.

EIGHT STARS OF GOLD ACTIVITY

LEARNING ABOUT CONSTELLATIONS

Why is the Big Dipper on the Alaska flag?

Level: Primary (K-2)



Background

Ancient people told stories about the stars they saw in the night sky. Alaska's flag uses the constellation of the Big Dipper (Ursa Major) and the North Star (Polaris) to symbolize the most northern state and its strength.

Summary

Children count the stars on Alaska's flag and make graphs or charts recording the stars they see. They explore a star map, find a "personal" constellation on the map, and make up a story about the constellation they "found."

Estimated Time

- 30 minutes for Part One. A few minutes of reporting each day for a week, and to chart the stars viewed (or more, at the teacher's discretion)
- 30-50 minutes to complete the "Unique Constellations" booklet, Parts Two & Three

In this activity students will focus on the following:

Alaska Performance Standards at Benchmark 1

Math - Statistics/ Probability

1. Collect, record, display, explain data
2. Describe data from a variety of visual displays including bar graphs

Alaska Content Standards

Math

A.1 Understand and use numeration
A.4 Use methods such as tables and graphs
C.1 Express mathematical ideas using pictures, graphs, charts
E.2 Use mathematics in daily life

English/Language Arts

A.4 Speak and write to inform and describe

Activities

Part One: Count stars and predict

- Before this activity, measure several sheets of paper to cover the top of an overhead projector. Punch a series of different holes in each paper with a sharp object such as the point of scissors. The number of holes should be large enough to be countable for the children in your class. You may wish to punch holes in various shapes/designs so children can count the holes and talk about the shapes and designs they see.
- Look at the design of the Alaska flag. Count the stars on the flag and talk about its shape. Ask the children what the design is usually called. (Big Dipper and North Star)
- Explain to the students how in earlier days, people used to look up at the night sky and see many different shapes and designs in the stars and gave them names. Tell the children that for the next week (or longer, if desired), the class is going to make a chart of the stars seen at night. Ask them to predict the number of stars they think they will see and record their predictions on a chart for display in the classroom. Using the overhead projector, practice counting stars using the paper you have pre-cut. (See above.)

Part Two: Observe and graph stars

- Make a class graph of 'Stars Seen at Night.' Depending on where you live, and the probability of seeing stars in your area, you can make the graphs more detailed if you wish. (See sample.) If you live in a place where stars are not typically seen at this time of year or in a location where it is frequently cloudy, you could

do a simple chart of Yes or No each night, with one child per night being assigned as the "stargazer" who reports the next morning.

Part Three: Create constellations, imagine their stories and write

- Print out and give each child a star map. Tell the students that this is a map of the night sky, with all the major stars, even the ones that we can't always see. Ask the students to use their fingers, to outline the shape of a symbol that their can see in the map. Have the students count out loud the number of stars in their shape/symbol. Then have the students outline their symbol using a highlighter or fine magic marker, again counting the number of stars in the outline of the shape. Then have each student share with another child what his/her saw in the sky.
- After each student has shared his/her own star symbol with another child, have the students dictate/write a story to a parent or an older reader buddy to go along with their shape/symbol.
- Make a class "unique constellations" booklet, assembling each child's entry.
- Option: Throughout these activities read selections from *Star Tales: North American Indian Stories About the Stars* or similar book.

Extension Activities

"Star Math" Make up a number of Star Math problems. For example, "If there are four stars and they all have five points, how many star points are there?" "If the Big Dipper lost one star, how many stars would be on the Alaska flag?" For homework, have second graders make up three or four of their own Star Math problems to stump their friends. The next day, have Star Math time with children exchanging their math problems.

Assessment

- Ask each child to explain which constellation is on the Alaska flag and what it means.
- Have each child explain his/her star map to another child or an adult, counting stars as he/she tells the story that goes with the map.

Materials

- Chart pad to make graphs, or graph paper
- Star maps, one per child (See sample or use website resource)
- Alaska flag
- Fine-point magic markers
- Drawing paper
- Overhead projector
- Copy or make star chart to use with the overhead projector
- Class graph (See sample)

Resources

Mayo, Gretchen Will. *Star Tales: North American Indian Stories About the Stars.* Illustrated by the author, New York: Walk & Co., 1987. 96 pp. Ages 8+. ISBN: 0-8027-6672-2 This book is a folktale collection about the nighttime sky taken from many northern United States and Canadian Indians. Each story has a carefully researched introduction concerning its origin. This well done book tells the legends with simplicity and humor.

Monroe, Jean Guard & Roy A. Williamson. *They Dance in the Sky.* Illustrated by Edgar Steward, Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1987. 130 pp. All Ages. ISBN: 0-395-39970-X Chapter Two, "The Celestial Bear, Stories of the Big Dipper" is especially appropriate. This collection of legends from various North American Indian cultures explains the sky world. It includes a bibliography, index and glossary.

Amazing Space
http://amazing-space.stsci.edu/
This website has classroom activities on astronomy

Dept. of Astronomy & Astrophysics, Penn State University
www.astro.psu.edu/users/jangren/const/filb.htm
This excellent constellation website with variations of star maps and background information, is suitable for all levels. It includes a star map with 30 constellations.

Vocabulary

constellation n. A group of fixed stars
Big Dipper n. Ursa Major

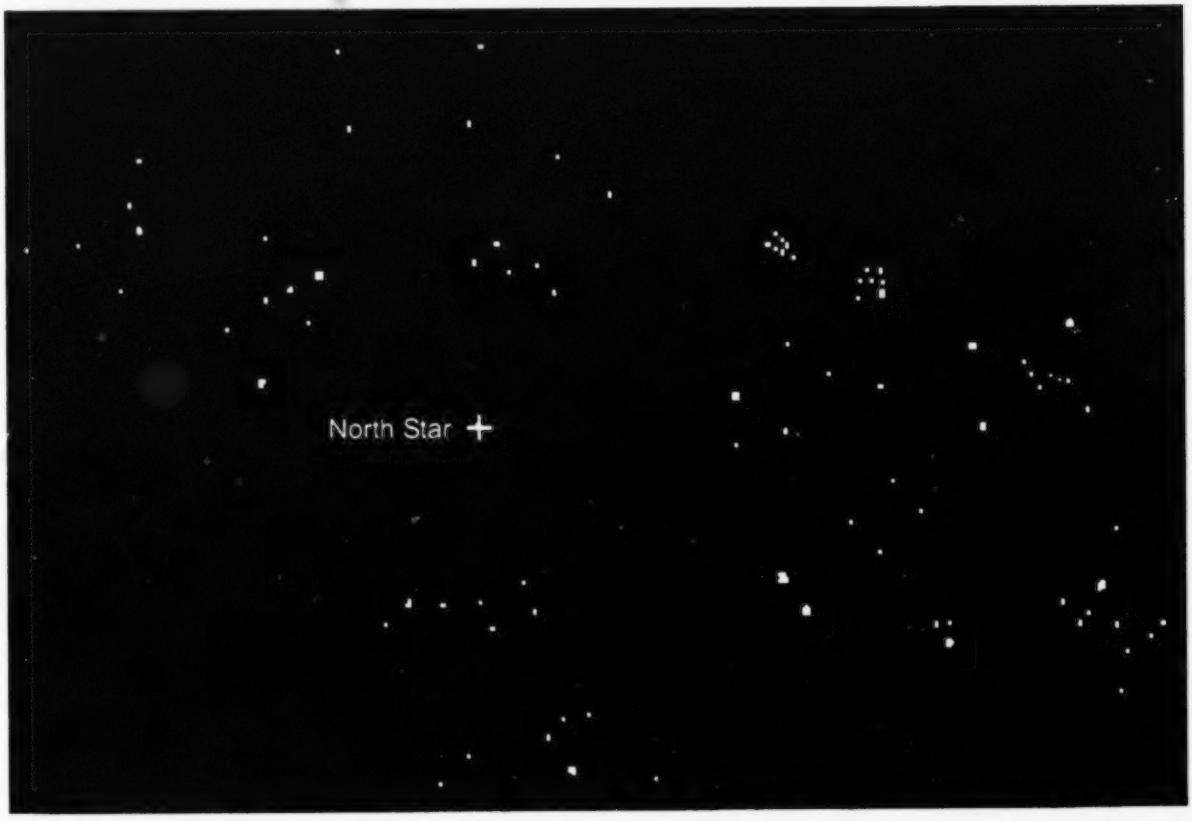
Star Chart Sample

Stars Seen at Night

Students' Names	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday

Star Map

www.astro.psu.edu/users/jangren/const/filb.htm



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